

MORE EXCITING BATTLES FROM THE 2022 ONTARIO OPEN

AN ARRAY OF TOUGH CHALLENGES

By George Supol

In addition to our extensive report published in ACM issue #27, there was an array of fighting games – played and annotated by the contestants of this thrilling event – which we were unable to include previously due to limitations in space. However, these clashes certainly deserve to be presented, as they illustrate the over-the-board challenges that favorites were faced with from early rounds.

TORONTO, ON
May 21-23, 2022
Ontario Open (6 rounds)

- 1. Nikolay NORITSYN 5
- 2-4. Mark PLOTKIN, Ameet GHASI (ENG), Koosha JAFERIAN (IRI) 4½
- 5-8. Shiyam THAVANDIRAN, Olivier Kenta CHIKU-RATTE, Rohan TALUKDAR, Maili-Jade OUELLET 4
- 9-13. Razvan PREOTU, Victor PLOTKIN, Eduardo TEODORO IV, Geordie DERRAUGH, Yunshan LI (CHN) ... 3½

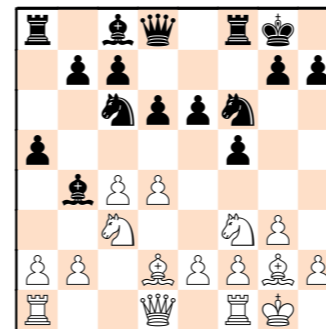
The tournament winner IM Nikolay Noritsyn played uncompromising chess and finished with 5/6, scoring five wins. However, his only defeat came in round 2 when he got upset by WGM Maili-Jade Ouellet.

A40

Maili-Jade Ouellet	2193
Nikolay Noritsyn	2481

Ontario Open, Toronto 2022
Notes by WGM Maili-Jade Ouellet

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘b4+ 3.♙d2 a5 4.♗c3 4.♙xb4 is not something White wants to play, because once the pawn takes back, 4...axb4, it is harder for White to develop the knight on b1 to a good square. 4...f5?! The idea here is to prevent White from pushing their pawn to e4, and gaining a significant space advantage. However, ...d7-d5 is the best move because ...f7-f5 leads to a Dutch-like pawn structure with a bishop on b4, which is not ideal. 4...♗f6? 5.e4 ♙xc3 6.bxc3 ♗xe4 7.♙g4 ♗xd2 8.♙xg7±. 5.g3 A matter of taste. Another plan is 5.e3 ♗f6 6.♙d3 0-0 7.♗ge2 b6 8.a3, also with a better game for White. 5...♗f6 6.♙g2 0-0 7.♗f3 d6 8.0-0 ♗c6



9.d5?! 9.a3 ♙xc3 10.♙xc3 ♗e4 11.♙c2 a4 12.♙ad1 was the best line. However, I did not play it because I felt as though it gave Black more space and increased his chances for counterplay.

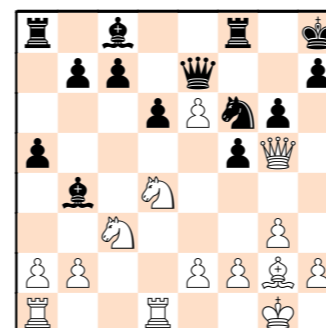
9...♗e5 10.♗d4 10.♗xe5 was best, leading to an equal position.

10...♗xc4 Black is better now. 11.dxe6 ♗xd2 12.♙xd2 g6 Black does not need to play ...g7-g6 because trading the f5 pawn for the e6 pawn would improve Black's position since it activates the light-squared bishop and opens up the f-file.

White is better after 12...♗e4? 13.♙c2 ♙xc3 (or 13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♙c5 15.♗xf5 ♙xe6 16.♗d4±) 14.♗xf5! ♙xe6 15.♙xe4;

Black's best was 12...c6 in order to protect the b7 pawn by closing off the a8-h1 diagonal and to prepare ...♙xe6. Then 13.♗xf5 ♙xe6.

13.♙fd1 ♙e7 14.♙g5 ♗h8 14...c6 15.♗xf5 ♙xe6±.

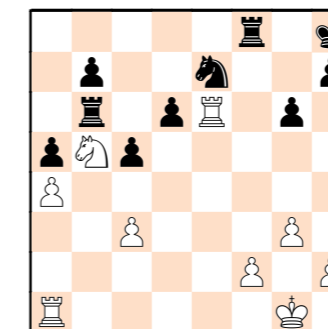


15.e4 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 fxe4 17.♙xe4 c5 18.♗b5 ♙a6 19.♙e1 ♙b6 An important move to protect the b7 pawn and avoid tactics with ♗c7. 19...♙xe6 20.♙g2 ♙b6 21.♗c7. 20.a4 ♙xe6 21.♙d5 ♗xd5 22.♙xe7 ♗xe7 23.♙xe6



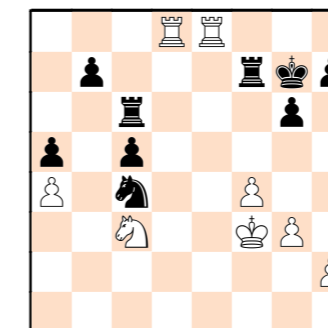
▲ Maili-Jade Ouellet

PHOTO: FIDE/Niki Rilga



Although White has lost a pawn, the position is still relatively equal or slightly better for White because of Black's passive pieces. Meanwhile, White has a strong knight on b5, which is difficult to eject, and I can easily control the open files with my rooks.

23...♗c8 24.c4 ♗g7 25.♗g2 ♙c6 26.f4 ♙f6 27.♙e4 ♗b6 28.♗f3 d5 29.cxd5 ♗xd5 30.♙e5 ♙f5 31.♙d1 ♗b6 32.♗c3 ♙f7 33.♙d8 ♗c4 34.♙ee8

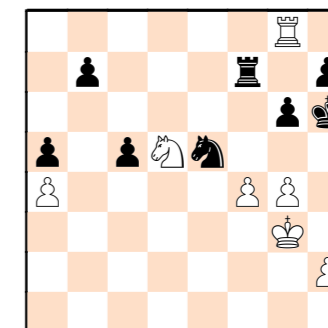


34...♙d6?? 34...♗d6 was the best move because it attacks the rook on e8 and controls the e4 square. 35.♙e6 (35.♙g8+ ♗f6) 35...♗c4 36.♙ee8=.

35.♙g8+ ♗h6 35...♗f6 runs into a fork by 36.♗e4+.

36.♙xd6 An important move to prevent Black from exchanging the rooks and conceding control of the g7 square. 36.g4 ♙xd8 37.♙xd8.

36...♗xd6 37.g4! ♗c4 38.♗d5 ♗e5+ 39.♗g3



White is threatening ♗h4 followed by g4-g5 mate.

39...♗xg4 40.♗xg4 ♙d7 41.♗f6 ♙d6 42.♗e4 ♙c6 43.♗h4 Black resigned because White is threatening ♗e4-f2-g4 mate, which cannot be prevented.

At the same time, away from the radar of GMs and IMs, another second-place finisher, CM Koosha Jaferian, made significant progress in the tournament standings by winning his third-round game.

**B23**

Koosha Jaferian	2218
Roman Gavrilin	2066

Ontario Open, Toronto 2022
Notes by CM Koosha Jaferian

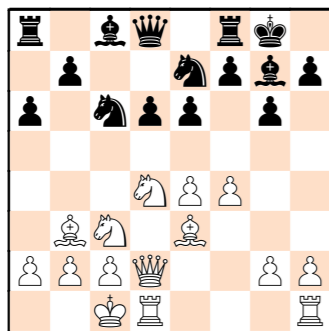
Going into the third round with a 50% score, I faced the talented Russian player, Roman Gavrilin. I saw that he beat a higher-rated player in Round 1 and had a great game against an IM in Round 2. So I expected a tough battle.

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 I saw that he played a great game in the Najdorf Sicilian in Round 1. Therefore I decided to go for the Grand Prix Attack.

2...d6 3.f4 g6 4.♘f3 ♘g7 5.♗c4 Up to here everything has gone according to plan and my preparations.

5...e6?! The first inaccuracy by my opponent. The problem is that now I can switch to an Open Sicilian and with the bishop on g7 and the pawn on e6, the d6 pawn will become a big weakness. There are two viable alternatives for Black: **5...♗f6** was what I was mostly prepared for, based on his online games. I was planning for **6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 ♘c6 8.♖e1** with attacking chances on the kingside. Alternatively, **5...♘c6** is the move order that Black should adopt if he wants to go for the ...e6 and ...♗ge7 setup, because now White can't easily play d2-d4. Then **6.0-0 e6 7.d3 ♗ge7** with a solid position for Black.

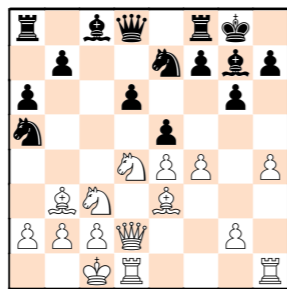
6.d4 Now White breaks open the centre!
6...cxd4 7.♗xd4 a6 8.♗b3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♗ge7 10.♖d2 0-0 11.0-0-0



The development phase has finished and I have reached a position with opposite sides castling. However, White's attack is deadlier. First of all, White has two of his kingside pawns already advanced and has more space.

Secondly, White has a lot of pieces near his own king to defend against Black's counterplay.

11...♗a5 12.h4 Every tempo matters! White should not hesitate to attack.
12...d5? The start of a wrong plan by my opponent. He intended to get his pawn to c4 by playing ...♗c4. However, his attack is simply too slow. Moreover, with this move, the bishop on g7 will be out of the game forever and cannot contribute to Black's attack on the queenside. The best chance for Black was to play **12...e5!**



Then, after **13.♗f3 ♗xb3+ 14.axb3 ♗g4 15.♖xd6 ♖xd6 16.♗xd6 exf4 17.♗xf4±** White is up a clear pawn, but Black's pieces will gain a lot of activity. However, it is hard to go for such a position in a real game and I understand my opponent's choice.

13.e5! Blocking the bishop on g7 once and for all.
13...♗c4? Black continues with his wrong plan. He still should have tried to open up the bishop on g7. Without it, his attack will be harmless. **13...f6!** **14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.g4+-** White is still much faster but Black will have some room to breathe.

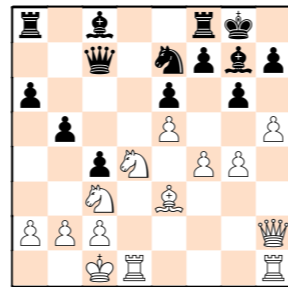
14.♗xc4 dxc4 15.g4 b5 16.♖h2? The only inaccuracy that I committed during the game. I could have gotten the same position as in the game by playing **16.h5 b4** (If Black tries the same defensive resource as noted on the next move, **16...g5**, then **17.h6! ♗h8 18.♖g2!+-** with all the threats coming along the d-file, long diagonal, and the kingside. The point of playing **16.h5** first is to keep the queen flexible and choose its best square based on the opponent's move.) **17.♖h2** with a transposition. The move order I chose in the game allows Black an interesting defensive resource.

16...b4? There was only one defensive

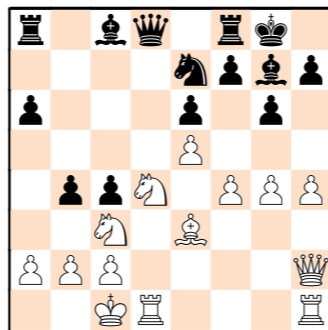


▲ Koosha Jaferian Photo by Ken Remark

resource for Black here and it is absolutely hard to find! **16...♖c7! 17.h5**



17...g5! Black blocks the kingside and now the queen on c7 is hitting the pawn on e5. Black is not getting mated yet. Nevertheless, White can still preserve a nearly decisive advantage by **18.♗he1 gxf4 19.♗xf4±**. My attack remains strong, and the knight will come to e4 on the next move. Black still has an insanely difficult defensive task in hand.

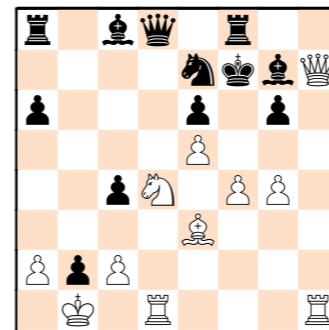


17.h5!! White's attack is simply faster. I just gave away a whole piece as I saw that my attack is crushing.

17...bxc3 18.hxg6 cxb2+ 19.♗b1! The pawn on b2 provides a great shield for my king on b1, which is now completely safe.

19...fxg6 Black could have held on a bit longer by **19...h6**. However, White has many winning moves here including **20.♗c6 ♖c7 21.f5!** and the attack will continue. The pawn on h6 will fall and mate is coming soon.

20.♖xh7+ ♗f7



21.♗f3!! The brilliant move of the game in my opinion. I saw this when I sacrificed a piece. On the other hand, I can also win a queen. However, after **21.♗xe6? ♗xe6 22.♗xd8? (22.f5! is still crushing.) 22...♗axd8 23.f5±**, although White is still winning, a lot of work is required in order to convert this position. Black has many pieces and after **23...♗h8 24.fxe6+ ♗xe6 25.♖xg7 ♗xh1+ 26.♗xb2**, his weak king gives White enough advantage, but it requires a lot of technique to convert this.

21...♗d5 22.♗g5+ ♖xg5 Black has to sacrifice the queen, otherwise I will take g6 and g7 both with check.

23.fxg5 ♗xe3 Looks like Black has three pieces and a strong pawn on b2 for the queen and my queen is trapped on h7.

But, **24.♗hf1+!** The final blow after which Black's position falls apart.

24...♗xf1 25.♗xf1+ ♗e8 26.♖xg6+ ♗d8 27.♗d1+! Another very important check. The rook was hanging on the previous move. Now I will win a free piece on g7 and the g-pawn and my opponent's weak king will decide the game.

Black resigned

Finally, we present a very tense battle

from the last round in which IM Shiyam Thavandiran prevented GM Razvan Preotu from reaching second place, with his third victory in the tournament.

B90

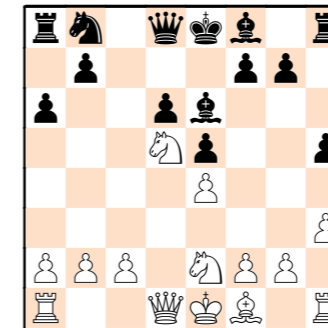
Shiyam Thavandiran	2399
Razvan Preotu	2453

Ontario Open, Toronto 2022
Notes by GM Razvan Preotu

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.♗de2 h5 The most popular move, preventing White from playing g2-g4.

8.♗g5 White is aiming to gain full control of the important d5 square.

8...♗e6 9.♗xf6 ♖xf6 10.♗d5 ♖d8



11.♖d3 The most aggressive setup by White, intending 0-0-0. **11.♗ec3** with the idea of ♗c4 and 0-0 is a positional alternative for White.

11...♗d7 12.0-0-0 g6 Aiming to develop the bishop to g7 or h6.

13.h4 A surprising move for me, as **13.♗b1** is by far the most popular move to get out of ...♗h6+ and secure the queenside. The text move has two ideas: 1) continue with g3 and ♗h3, and then maybe f2-f4; 2) or play f2-f3 and later g2-g4. White needs to play h4 before playing f3 to stop Black from playing ...h5-h4 himself.

13...♗c5 14.♖a3 The best square for the queen. The pawn on e4 is not hanging because of ♖a4+. **14.♖f3** does not work well with the white pawn on h4. After **14...♗g7** White has difficulty developing as ♗ec3 runs into ...♗g4. f3 is no longer possible so the only sensible plan is g3, followed by ♗h3, but after ♗xe6 fxe6, the queen on f3 will be a target for Black's rook on f8.

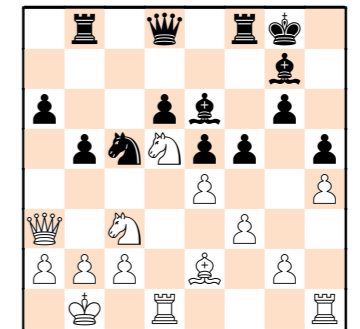
14...♗g7 After some thought I decided

to develop normally and continue with castling short and going for ...b7-b5. **14...♗xd5** is a strong alternative that I also considered, exchanging the knight before White can play ♗ec3.

15.♗ec3 0-0 16.f3 f5 I was worried about White preparing g2-g4 and opening up my kingside, which is why I played this move. The e4 pawn is also a target now.

17.♗e2 b5 18.♗b1 18.exf5 gxf5 19.f4 Attacking the h5 pawn is what I was mostly analyzing during the game. **19...♖b8** was my intended move, preparing ...b5-b4. I did not like to play ...e5-e4 because it takes away the square from my knight. **20.fxe5 ♗xe5 21.♗xh5 ♖d7** followed by ...♖g7 and I thought this would give me enough compensation for the pawn because of the pressure on the long diagonal.

18...♖b8



19.b4!? A creative way of dealing with the potential threat of ...b4. Black can't simply retreat the knight because of ♖xa6.

19...fxe4! Opening the f-file for my rook. My knight is not actually hanging. **19...a5** was my main alternative, trying to force ...b5-b4. I rejected this because after the forced **20.♖xa5 ♖xa5 21.bxa5 b4 22.♗b5 fxe4 23.♗dc7** I did not like my position. The d6 pawn is weak and the a6 pawn is very dangerous.

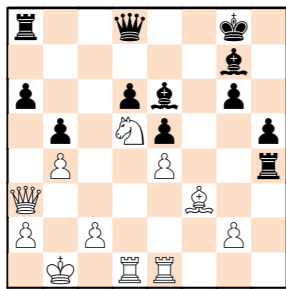
20.♗xe4! The best move, forcing a trade of knights. **20.fxe4 a5!** With the moves fxe4 fxe4 included, this line works a lot better for Black compared to **19...a5 21.bxc5 (21.♖xa5 ♖xa5 22.bxa5 b4 23.♗b5 ♗xe4) 21...b4 22.♖a4 bxc3+ 23.♗a1 dxc5 24.♗xc3 ♖e7; 20.bxc5 b4 21.♗xb4 exf3 22.♗xf3 a5**, Black wins back the piece and has successfully opened up White's king.

20...♗xe4 21.fxe4 ♗f4! A strong move

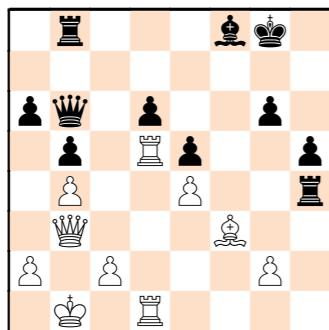
as it attacks the e4 and h4 pawns. White can't defend both pawns and capturing the rook is very dangerous as it opens the long diagonal for Black's bishop.

22. ♖f3 22. ♘xf4? exf4, followed by ... ♗f6 and ... ♖c8 is very bad for White. 22... ♖xh4 23. ♖he1? This gives Black time to consolidate his pawn advantage. 23. ♖xh4 ♗xh4 24. ♘c7 wins back the pawn and keeps the game complicated and balanced. 24... ♗f7 25. ♗xa6=.

23... ♗xd5?! A poor exchange. I wanted to defend the a6 pawn with ... ♗b6, but my extra pawn will not be very relevant in an opposite-color bishop position. 23... ♖a8! Simply defending the a6 pawn was strong and my initial idea.



I was worried about my rook getting trapped after 24. ♗e3 with the idea of 25. g3 ♖h2, 26. ♗g1, but this does not work well for White. 24... a5, 25. g3 ♖h3 26. ♗g2 ♖h2 27. ♗g1 axb4! 28. ♗xh2 ♗a5+ gives Black a winning attack despite being a rook down. Black's queen will get to a2 and ... ♗h6 will be deadly with the king on c1. 24. ♖xd5 ♗b6 25. ♖ed1?! 25. ♗b3 is more accurate so as not to give Black an option of ... ♗g7. 25... ♗f8 26. ♗b3



26... ♗h8?! 26... ♗g7, controlling f7 so there is no ♗f7 available after the rook retreats, is much stronger. I did not like



▲ Razvan Preotu

Photo by Ken Remark

having the king on the seventh rank because of ideas involving ♖xe5 dx5, ♖d7+ followed by ♗f7, but this simply does not work after ... ♗h6.

27. ♖5d3 I missed that after this move White's queen threatens to invade to both e6 and f7.

27... ♗d8? Allowing ♗f7 is very bad. 27... ♗g7! Preventing ♗f7 was still the best move.

28. ♗e6? 28. ♗f7 leaves Black in a very awkward situation. The g6 pawn is hanging and the natural 28... ♗g5 allows 29. ♗a7 and White wins the a6 and b5 pawns. However 28... d5! would be the best defense to open the a3-f8 diagonal. Now after ... ♗e7 the b4 pawn is under attack. 29. ♖xd5 ♗e7 30. ♖xg6 ♗xb4+ 31. ♗c1 ♗a3+ 32. ♗d2 is still very good for White. The main difference is that White has the more active rooks.

28... ♗g7 Defending the g6 pawn and preventing ♗f7 consolidates the position.

29. g3 ♖h2 30. ♖xd6 White does not have any sensible alternatives.

30... ♗xd6 31. ♖xd6 At this point we each had around 5 minutes left on the clock, so I'm sure both of us were feeling tense.

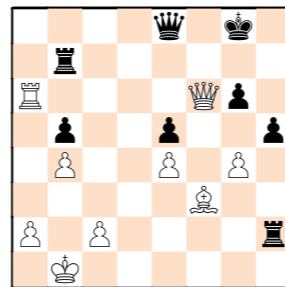
31... ♗e8 I wanted to keep the game going by not allowing a forced draw. Winning this game would have given me a chance to tie for 2nd place in the tournament. 31... ♗g5 32. ♖d7+ ♗h6 33. ♗f7 is a forced repetition. 33... ♖xg3 34. ♗h7+ ♗g5 35. ♗e7+ ♗h6=.

32. ♗f6+ ♗g8 I did not mind giving up

the g6 pawn if I could exchange queens, and thought this was a better square than h6 or h7.

33. ♖xa6 ♖b7 Securing the seventh rank and preventing ♖a7. Here I was feeling good about my position, as I had the plan of ... ♖g7 and ... ♗f8 to trade queens.

34. ♖e6?! 34. g4! was the only move to keep the balance.

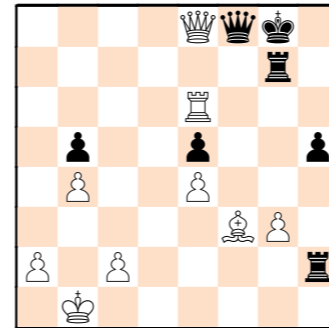


This is a hard move to play because it allows h4 creating a dangerous passed pawn, but it is important to open the b8-h2 diagonal so that ... ♗xe5 will attack the rook on h2. 34... h4 35. ♖e6 ♗f8 (35... ♗f7? 36. ♗xe5 The rook on h2 is attacked so Black loses material. 36... ♗h7 37. ♖e8 ♗g7 38. ♗xh2+-) 36. ♗xe5 ♗xb4+= Black has to force a repetition with ... ♗e1-b4.

34... ♗f8? A bad move based on a miscalculation. The queen attacks b4 and I did not think White could capture on g6 because of ... ♖g7. Instead 34... ♗f7! 35. ♗xe5 ♗h7 would have secured the black king's position. ♖e8 is met by ... ♗g7. 36. g4 ♗c7!

Threatening ... ♗xc2+ and forcing a queen exchange to a far more favorable endgame. 37. ♗xc7+ ♖xc7 38. gxf5 ♖xc2 39. hxg6+ ♗h6-+ With White's king being completely cut off I believe Black should be winning, although it is still complicated.

35. ♗xg6+ ♖g7 36. ♗e8 I missed this move, pinning my queen.



36... ♖xg3? This trades the h-pawn for the g-pawn which favors White. 36... ♗xe8 37. ♖xe8+ ♗h7 38. ♖xe5 ♗h6 was the best defense and leads to a sharp endgame. White is unable to defend the g3 pawn so Black will have a very strong passed h-pawn, compensating for White's queenside pawns.

37. ♗xh5 I thought this move was impossible because of ♖xh5, but I missed White has ♖g6+.

37... ♗xe8 37... ♖xh5? 38. ♖g6+ ♖xg6 39. ♗xg6+ ♗g7 40. ♖xh5 ♗g1+ 41. ♗b2 ♗d4+ 42. c3 ♗d2+ 43. ♗b3+- White's queen controls d1 so Black has no more checks and is down two pawns.

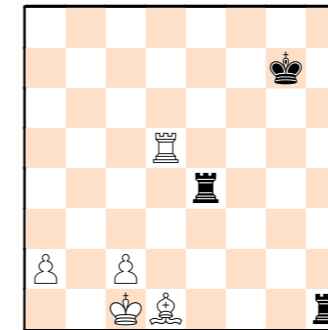
38. ♖xe8+ ♗g7 39. ♖xe5 I was very worried about losing this game now. White has the material advantage of bishop and three pawns for the rook and the b5 pawn is very weak. Both of us were playing on the increment for the remainder of the game.

39... ♖c3 40. ♗d1 ♖c4 An important move. White is unable to win the b5 pawn without losing his own b4 pawn.

41. ♖xb5 Defending the pawn with 41. a3 is what I was worried about. Then I intended 41... ♖d4 42. ♗f3 ♖f2 43. ♗g4 ♖c4 and it seemed like I had enough play against the c2 and e4 pawns. 44. ♗d1 ♖f1 White has to play ♖d5 to prevent ♖d4. 45. ♖d5 ♖xe4 46. ♗b2 ♗f6= White is unable to win the b5 pawn so Black should draw.

41... ♖h1 Now I win the b4 pawn by force

as White must play ♖d5 to prevent ♖d4. 42. ♖d5 ♖xb4+ 43. ♗c1 ♖xe4



Here I felt comfortable that I should draw the game, as White's passed pawns are not connected.

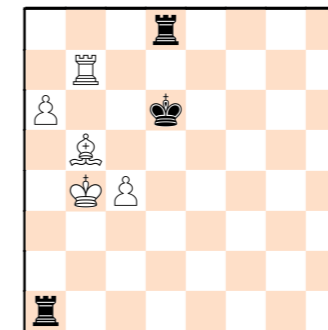
44. ♗b2 ♖b4+ 45. ♗c3 ♖b8 More logical was 45... ♖hh4, preventing the pawns from advancing past the fourth rank.

46. a4 ♖h4 47. a5 ♖a4 48. ♗e2 I allowed White to get the pawn to a6 and started to feel a bit nervous.

48... ♗f6 49. a6 ♗e7 50. ♗b5 ♖a1?! A careless move, not realizing White's idea as 60... ♖xb5 51. ♖xb5 ♖xa6 is a theoretical drawn position but I did not want to enter this if I didn't have to, as there were still chances to make mistakes.

51. ♖d7+ White intends ♖b7 next, which is very strong and what I missed.

51... ♗e6 52. ♖b7 White gains control of the b-file and can hide his king on b6. 52... ♖d8 53. ♗b4 ♗d6 54. c4



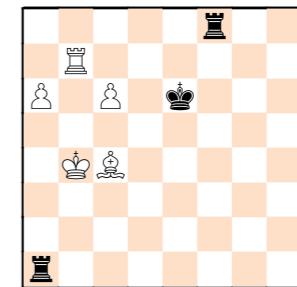
54... ♖a8? Allowing the c-pawn to advance is a losing mistake. 54... ♖c8, preventing c4-c5, was the only defense. 55. ♖d7+ ♗e6, when ... ♖xa6 is now a threat. Then, after 56. ♖d2 ♗e7 57. ♖d5 ♗f6 58. c5 ♗e6 59. ♖d6+ ♗e7 60. ♖d7+ ♗e6, White is unable to advance the c-pawn without allowing Black to

sacrifice his rook the two pawns, leading to a theoretically drawn endgame of ♗+♖+♗ vs. ♗+♖. 61. c6 ♖xc6 62. ♗xc6 ♖xa6=.

55. c5+ ♗d5 56. ♖d7+ ♗e6 57. c6 White's pawns are too far advanced now and he's winning.

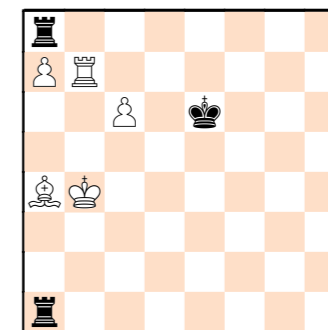
57... ♖b8 57... ♖8xa6 58. ♗xa6 ♖xa6 59. ♗c5 is a losing endgame.

58. ♖b7 ♖f8 59. a7? This natural move throws away the win, as it ties down the rook to defending the pawn. 59. ♗c4+!



Forcing the king further away from the pawns and allowing ♗c5 was the cleanest way to win. 59... ♗d6 (59... ♗f6 60. ♗c5+-) 60. ♖d7+ is the important idea as 60... ♗xc6 allows checkmate by 61. ♗b5+ ♗b6 62. ♖b7 mate.

59... ♖a8 Now Black is holding on. 60. ♗a4



60... ♖b1+? The final mistake of the game, allowing ♗c5. Necessary was 60... ♗d6, when after 61. ♖d7+ ♗e6 62. ♗b5 ♖a3, Black can wait with the rook by playing ... ♖a1-a3 and White is unable to improve his position. 63. ♗b4 ♖a1 64. ♗b3+ ♗f6 65. ♗a4 ♗e6=.

61. ♗c5 ♖a1 62. ♗b3+ White gets to play c6-c7 which is decisive. 62... ♗e5 63. c7 ♖c8 64. ♗c6 ♖c1+ 65. ♗d7 ♖a8 66. ♖b5+ ♗f6 67. ♖a5 ♗g7 68. ♗d5 ♖d1 69. c8 ♗

Black resigned ■